

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USDELMC USNATO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 17341

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, BE
SUBJECT: PLAN DELTA AND POSSIBLE MOVE OF NAPMA TO
BRUNSSUM

REF: STATE 222225

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1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE NAPMA RELOCATION QUESTION
WITH ERIC BAL, CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S NATO
OFFICE. IN PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF
BELGIAN THINKING, BAL UNDERScoreD THAT HE WAS PRESENTING
ONLY HIS "PRELIMINARY" VIEWS, SINCE THE FORMAL BELGIAN
POSITION IS STILL UNDER STUDY.

2. ACCORDING TO BAL, IT IS "LOGICAL" THAT NAPMA BE LOCATED IN BELGIUM, CLOSE TO THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY DECISION-MAKING CENTERS OF THE ALLIANCE. GIVEN THE "OBVIOUS" ADVANTAGES TO THE NAPMA HOST COUNTRY (TAKEN TO MEAN JOBS AND OTHER ECONOMIC BENEFITS), CHOICE OF A BELGIAN SITE WOULD ALSO BE "EQUITABLE," TAKING INTO ACCOUNT BELGIUM'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ALLIANCE AS HOST NATION FOR NATO HEADQUARTERS AND SHAPE.

3. AT THIS POINT, BAL QUICKLY ADDED THAT THE BELGIAN DESIRE TO HOST NAPMA AEELECTED THE FACT THAT NAPMA WAS A NATO ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS RATHER THAN AN OPERATIONAL MILITARY BASE. WITH EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS INHERENT IN THE QUESTION OF EUCOM WARTIME COLLOCATION, HE ONCE AGAIN RECALLED THAT THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH BELGIUM HAD ACCEPTED NATO AND SHAPE INCLUDED FORMAL GOVERNMENT DECLARATIONS CONCERNING HOSTING ANY FUTURE OPERATIONAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

4. BAL ALSO TOOK PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT WHAT BELGIUM WOULD DO "IN THE AWACS FRAMEWORK" HAD NOT YET BEEN DECIDED. HE SAID THAT STATEMENTS BY LEADING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SHOULD LEAD ONE TO EXPECT THAT BELGIUM WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE OPERATION OF THE AWACS SYSTEM AND WOULD ADAPT ITS TECHNICAL GROUND INFRASTRUCTURE ACCORDING-
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LY. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT A FAVORABLE DECISION ON NAPMA LOCATION WOULD LEAD TO A GREATER DEGREE OF BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN AWACS. ASKED ABOUT THE EFFECT OF A DECISION TO SITE THE NAPMA FACILITY ELSEWHERE, HE SAID (WITH TONE AND GESTURE INDICATING A STATEMENT OF THE OBVIOUS) THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT COULD CERTAINLY BE EXPECTED TO HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE QUESTION OF BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN AWACS.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE BAL'S EXPOSITION ACCURATELY FORECASTS THE POSITION THAT THE BELGIANS WILL TAKE IN NATO CONSIDERATION OF THE NAPMA RELOCATION QUESTION. IT IS CONSISTENT WITH BELGIAN APPROACHES TO SIMILAR ISSUES. WE ALSO AGREE WITH BAL'S ASSESSMENT THAT LOSING OUT ON A BID TO HOST NAPMA COULD INCREASE THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURES AGAINST MORE EXTENSIVE BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN AWACS AND PERHAPS TILT THE SCALE TOWARDS AN EVENTUAL NEGATIVE DECISION.

6. WE ARE NOT, HOWEVER, PERSUADED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD ACCEPT THE ASSERTION THAT THERE CAN BE NO LINKAGE OF

THE NAPMA LOCATION DECISION TO MORE FORTHCOMING
BELGIAN ATTITUDES ON AWACS. THE EVENTUAL U.S. POSITION
ON A PREFERRED NAPMA LOCATION IS, OF COURSE, ONE TO
BE DETERMINED ON THE BASIS OF THE VARIOUS NATO INTERESTS
AND OBJECTIVES INVOLVED. IF, HOWEVER, THE U.S. DOES
DECIDE TO ENDORSE THE BELGIAN BID, WE BELIEVE THAT AN
EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO ELICIT FROM THE BELGIANS,
IN RETURN, AN EARLY AND FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO OUR
LONGSTANDING AWACS PROPOSAL. OLSEN

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